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WOMAN IN THE ITALIAN NOVEL.

BY JOSEPH SPENCER KENNARD, LL.D.

LESS than half a century ago, there were many Italian peoples, but there was no Italian Nation. Out of these petty duchies, kingdoms and states, the ideals of unity and liberty have made the constitutional Kingdom of Italy. Essential differences distinguished the Roman from the Lombard, the Venetian from the Sicilian; and these social, lingual, intellectual and temperamental differences were not obliterated by a stroke of the pen, as the petty political divisions were swept away by a decree. Much, indeed, yet remains to be accomplished; but to-day the whole Italian peninsula is inhabited by one Italian Nation.

Doubtless because of these diversities, the words "Italian woman" do not evoke one clearly outlined figure, though they do suggest a vision of indefinite beauty.

If, indeed, even now, there exists a true "Italian Type" of woman, blossoming from an ancient stock, in a nation new-born, its presentation will be a genuine contribution to "feminism" and a valuable study in social evolution. Especially valuable because the phenomena of Italian feminine development and adaptation epitomizes the story of other slower national evolutions and indicates the direction of certain world-wide currents.

Not only are Italian women everywhere aspiring after better education and seeking for larger personal independence, but, as the pursuit of these aims has established a closer affinity between women's organizations, Italian women have discovered many unsuspected resemblances, which, in the aggregate, make up the "Italian Type"—a type whose psychological and social aspects will be best revealed through the Italian novel, if that novel satisfies Taine's luminous definition, "*Le Roman est la confession d'une société*"; because this "confession," besides avowedly and

purposely presenting facts, describing customs, painting portraits and landscapes, also unmask the feminine soul. For the most sincere confession will disclose emotions unsuspected even by the penitent. There is eloquence in omission, and reticence may be as instructive as speech.

How true this is of the Italian novelists! How much they write about their countrywomen! But how much there is which they neither say nor comprehend! D'Annunzio's romances are masterpieces of suggestive poetry; Fogazzaro's novels are philosophic studies; hundreds of Italian novels supply valuable information on many subjects; yet how often do these writers imperfectly understand feminine psychology!

And—fact significant—the more these novels are untrue to the soul of the Italian woman, the more often are they characteristic of Italian life. For the Italian rarely studies, or cares for, the psyche of his women. Except for gallantry, the sexes keep much apart. Few men confide in the women they most love and honor; few consent to accept advice from them, and scarcely one will willingly grant them authority.

Of that close communion, that perfect confidence, which should begin with a mother's kiss to her babe new-born, and continue to son, brother, husband; vivifying and ennobling, comforting and supporting all along life's rugged path, even attending the old man to his final rest, there is a singular lack among Italians. The Catholic Church is partly responsible for this. Despite the exaltation of The Virgin, woman's inferiority and the debasing nature of her influence are preached. It is a corollary to the exaltation of celibacy and to the teaching that sexual love is degrading and that the flesh wars against the spirit. Immorality is not checked by such teaching, but tenderness is blunted and respect for woman is lessened. The struggle for bread has also brought the sexes into conflict. Everywhere, woman now competes with man. If masculine opposition is fierce and pitiless, Amazonian invasion is bold and eager. Poverty among the Italian masses and failure to recognize that the success of the woman does not necessarily imply the defeat of the man, have accentuated this antagonism.

The moral avarice of the primitive male savage still poisons Italian social intercourse. There are still retrograde spirits that feel as a loss to one sex every advantage obtained by the other.

All that the Italian woman has gained, she has obtained by her own unaided efforts. No one has smoothed the rough way for her; no one has cheered her victories or applauded her bravery. Patient, long-suffering and unassuming, she has availed herself of every opportunity, and made marvellous progress in the development of her own personality and as a factor in the social economy. The Italian novel, being the reflection of Italian society, has participated in this misconception, which is the capital failing in much otherwise praiseworthy fiction.

Of twin birth with the national ideal of a free and united Italy, the Italian romance echoed the first heart-beat of classic patriotism. It sang the passionate aspirations of those romantic heroes, and played an important part in the general revolt against foreign oppression. This first and heroic period of novel-writing produced several historic romances, and one of them was a masterpiece; but in all their pages there is not one great feminine character. Foscolo's Teresa is but the mirror of passionate Jacopo Ortis, and Manzoni's religious scruples, compelling him to omit from his novel all love-passages, have resulted in shadowy profiles instead of achieved types of womanhood. Manzoni's imitators have crowded their books with unreal heroines of foreign pattern, in no wise resembling the typical Italian woman who was then awakening from centennial apathy and earnestly desirous of sharing in the common danger and common responsibility.

Not until the end of this patriotic and sentimental period,—in 1859, when Ippolito Nievo produced his "*Memoirs of an Octogenarian*,"—do we have lifelike feminine portrayal in an Italian novel. Pisana, the best of these characters, is the typical romantic heroine. With characteristic passionate impulse, recklessness and generosity, she lacks moral principle, is an unbridled coquette and sentimentalist. Her every act and word is consistent with her surroundings; yet she lives, her heart-throbs are real and she possesses a distinct individuality. Like all vital creatures, she suggests a whole series of complementary ideas, which arouse the reader's criticism and perplex his judgment. When her generosity becomes folly, when her passion passes into immorality, when she lies and plots, when she demeans herself to an inexcusable sacrifice, there is no recognized standard of propriety by which such a nature can be measured. Pisana is a law unto herself, as must be every imperial personality.

Underlying all the romantic atmosphere,—so characteristic of the literary moment,—there is a deeply observed evolution of one woman's soul. The startling events of the story are logical, if considered as mile-stones in Pisana's development. Even her adventures and intrigues are the blind strivings of a soul urged onward by the thirst for self-sacrifice, and an unsatiated craving for love, for love which finally becomes redemption. So true is this character of Pisana, that the modern reader, trained in psychological analysis, better appreciates it than did Nievo's contemporaries. Half a century of enlightened criticism has sifted the priceless ore from its encumbering romantic rubbish.

Only fifteen years separate Nievo's picture from the first efforts of the Italian realist school. Yet that short interval marks an important change in Italian life and thought. To a period of enthusiasm and heroism succeeded the despondency that so often follows the realization of a dream. The cold light of sordid achievement dimmed the lustre of bright expectation. Poverty, and the limitations of liberty, disilluminated even the most fervent fusionist about the perfections of United Italy. In this dark hour, literary realism, with its pitiless thirst for facts, its pessimistic interpretation of truth, its dogmatism about the scientific redress of wrongs, was accepted by the Italian artist as a necessary reaction from romanticism, and appeared to the Italian novelist an adequate formula for fiction.

This dogma of pure realism was opposed to the serene and poetic traditions of Italian literature. Yet, for a time, realism was rampant; and even when in part displaced by the torrent of new ideas, broad traces of its passage remained in the Italian novel. The clamorous success of Zola's *études de mœurs* was mistaken for Italian preference; but these purposely gross and deliberately vulgar descriptions were so contrary to innate national tendencies as to produce only a temporary obsession.

Giovanni Verga was the first author of stories and novels of genuine Italian realism. Wisely he chose his subjects from the simple Sicilian life. Discarding facile dialect, he speaks in fragmentary sentences pregnant with the rude passion and confused ideas of the common people. The Sicilian noonday glare outlines the landscape in high relief. Unembarrassed by self-consciousness, unrestrained by reticence, the unfeigned feelings and uncurbed passions of these simple people are revealed in all their

impulsive sincerity within a rude environment of mediæval customs. From this gallery of pastoral figures emerges a type of womanhood which is delineated with truth, vigor and originality. This is the passive, Eastern, almost Biblical, woman. As in an Egyptian or Byzantine picture, there is the unconscious hieratic pose; her movements are slow and dignified; she is not obedient,—since obedience implies the surrender of conscious will,—but she is utterly submissive. Curbed by fatalism and timidity, she questions neither the moral law which enslaves her nor the right and power of man, her master. Her religion is superstition, her chastity instinctive. Yet there is in her,—as there is in every Arcadian creature,—a harmony with her environment. She is a part of her moral world; her beauty blends with the lines and colors of surrounding sea and sky.

A sunburnt pallid face is illumined by great dark eyes that gleam under a glossy mass of sombre hair; a body that ill usage and toil have strained, reveals, under its rags, the slender elegance of a Tanagra; the slowness of her gesture attains to stateliness in the simple rites of her faith; the mellow accents of her deep-toned voice mingle in concord with the song of the waves on the pebbly shore. Nor is her spirit less attuned to her moral world. There is no vulgarity in her ignorance. She meekly bends to the fatal necessity of her master's will; and when, in blind impulse, she commits some unpremeditated crime of jealousy or vengeance, her responsibility is limited by her utter ignorance of self-control. Like any other dumb, hard-used creature, she acts instinctively.

Diodata, the farm girl in "*Mastro Don Gesualdo*," represents this type. To her master, Don Gesualdo, she has granted all that was hers to give, her virginal innocence, her patient toil, her unrequited devotion that shines out of her eyes, doglike in their dumb entreaty, imploring his caress. Yet, when told that he is to marry a noble-born Signora, she makes no protest, scarce dares show her grief, and crouches at his feet, gulping down her heavy tears. With the same unquestioning submission, she had accepted the master's will when this will was to possess her. She now accepts from his hand a complacent lout, who will take her to wife and with her embrace the master's children and pocket the master's money. Fate preordained this arrangement, and in Diodata's soul there is no protest. But when sickness and age

have reduced the wretched millionaire to that awful solitude of the unloved and the unlovable, then Diodata returns, bringing Don Gesualdo the balsam of disinterested affection and genuine pity.

In Grazia Deledda's Sardinian sketches, the feminine characters, though delineated in accordance with Verga's æsthetic principle, are remarkable for originality, sincerity and direct observation.

Centuries of patriarchal life in a land of barren fallows and extensive forests, of traditional superstition and relentless struggle, have powerfully moulded the Sardinian woman. She reverences the head of the family, yet maintains her self-respect; her large share in field labor and cattle tending, the importance which inherited Oriental jealousy gives to her possession, the deadly feuds that any misbehavior on her part is sure to kindle, endow her with a dignity in singular contrast with her lack of education. Zia Grazia, the stern widow of a brigand, who sits by her fireless hearth and mourns the departed hero and laments the coward spirit of her pious son; Oli, the degraded mother who commits suicide, to save her son from shame and to escape his reproaches, are truly feminine characters and entirely Sardinian.

Federigo De Roberto has in his novels so enlarged the formula of the realists as to present not merely one entire family, or even one entire section of society; in his novel, "The Viceroy," he includes the whole social world of his native Sicily. This ample reconstruction contains a notable gallery of masculine portraits, but the feminine characters are shadowy representations. In another novel, "Illusions," where De Roberto presumes to give the complete history of a woman, he only records a series of her love-affairs, from the precocious mishap of her unguarded childhood to the sad fate of the white-haired woman who has always pursued an *ignis fatuus* of illusions, and has fallen into moral marsh and mire.

Individualism, that predominant characteristic of the Italian mind, soon invaded the realistic school. Its writers adhered to the fundamental dogma of objective investigation and truthful rendering, but they followed personal preferences and aptitudes. Matilde Serao's emotional temperament sometimes leads her into sentimental wanderings, but she has never swerved from her fundamental conception of the psychology of her sex: love is for Serao the sole master-passion, the only fount of joy or sorrow.

Carmela Minimo, the ballet girl, is a very beggar for love. Her plainness has saved her from temptation, but she has been infected by contact with the wicked world around her; and, when love does come, it is in the poisoned atmosphere of a Neapolitan theatre. The fashionable and adored Terzi ridicules her proverbial chastity. So the infatuated girl (in her desire to conform to her idol's standard) takes a lover. This shop clerk, who treats her to cheap suppers and bad wines in tawdry restaurants, who shocks her religious sentiments, and wounds her feelings, dismisses her rudely when he realizes that she is no credit to his snobbery. Carmela, thinking to come nearer to Terzi's ideal, accepts a second lover.

But suddenly the scene changes; the doll becomes a woman! Terzi is dead! He has preferred suicide to facing the consequences of folly and extravagance. In a cheap lodging-house he lies alone. Carmela finds him; she claims the privilege of watching by that corpse and of weeping for that dead man who now is hers. By the ruin of her life, by the loss of her hopes of heaven, she has purchased the right of kissing those cold lips, that in life gave her only a mocking smile and a ribald joke. Yet, such is the divine folly of love, she does not regret the exchange.

The overmastering passion, so enslaving the will that the entire life drifts like a rudderless boat to final wreck, is the characteristic trait of all Matilde Serao's women. In "Sister Joan of the Cross," the object of that passion is changed, but the incapacity for resisting it remains. By Government decree the little wizened nun is thrust from her monastery out into the world. Her soul is obsessed by passion for conventual walls, for the black veil, for the enforced silence, for all those practices that gave dignity to her life. Blinded by her infatuation, she slips down, ever down, into more miserable situations, serenely content to accept every humiliation if only she can have a black gown and shawl of monastic fashion, and save her religious name from contamination. How pathetic the last scene of all! She sits at a table which charity has spread for the poorest mendicants, and she partakes humbly of these alms; but, when a grand lady patroness asks for her name, she gives her religious surname with the pride of a duchess handing her emblazoned visiting-card.

In the novels of another woman writer,—Neera,—are to be found more complex psychological studies. Thus, Teresa, reared

in a slow country town, is surrounded by that besotted selfishness which crushes the weak, and burdens with misery the uncomplaining. Even before her tenth year she is the family drudge, the maid of all work, the sickly mother's nurse. She rears a brood of younger brothers and sisters, and patiently endures her father's complaints. That her marriage portion may be saved for her brother, her parents refuse consent to her marriage. Teresa's nature is embittered in resisting the desires of her own heart and the pleadings of her *fiancé*. She becomes a fretful spinster, and the man whom she might have inspired to a useful life, discouraged and unrestrained, slips into snares and pitfalls.

Lydia, another of Neera's heroines, is petted and flattered by a brilliant social circle, is led into extravagance, tempted to coquetry, and initiated into the corruptions of the Neapolitan aristocracy, but never helped toward a more noble life. At first she scorns the banality of marriage, and when disillusion, wounded vanity and overwrought nerves finally bring her to the verge of a darker precipice, she finds refuge in suicide.

Thus even noble-minded Neera arrives at the same conclusion as passionate Serao—that, since woman is only meant to inspire and feel love, it is useless to study any other phase of her psyche and superfluous to claim for her any other right than the free satisfaction of her sensualism. These strange advocates of feminism, ignoring the higher demands of the woman's nature, only ask that this unique demand be recognized.

It was inevitable that the profounder truths resulting from psychological investigation should succeed the superficialities of realism. The lens and lancet system was not discarded, but its method was extended to the more complex problems of the human soul. Writers strove to rise above the rude description of obvious phenomena to a consideration of motives; winged imagination and poetical reconstruction added their charm, where heretofore there had only been objective analysis and dogmatic assertion.

To these new elements of the novel Fogazzaro has added his genial philosophy. He is a trained thinker, who, when impelled by his religious convictions to a larger interpretation of life, demands a scientific assurance to confirm his faith. He belongs, with Blaise Pascal, to that *élite* of storm-tossed souls who are perpetually tortured by their craving for certainty and by their thirst for absolute faith in a revealed religion. In his desire to

reconcile the Darwinian and Spencerian theories with the Catholic creed, he devised a pretty formula when he defined the evolution of man and the survival of the fittest as the "*modus operandi* of Divinity"; yet no formula can quiet the soul drawn to an ideal, and shackled to reality by scientific training.

This dualism, which informs all Fogazzaro's writings, and peculiarly his novels, is also the key-note of his interpretation of feminine characters. The double current of ideas, ever at war within him, yet ever blending in artistic creations, makes him scrupulously respectful of truth in the rendering of objective elements, and poetically imaginative in their interpretation. This excellent method gives to his delineation of women greater power and completeness, because he perceives that there are other emotions and other desires in a woman's heart than her longing for masculine admiration and love.

Having adopted this view-point, Fogazzaro has not disdained to trace portraits of women who, though they have outlived the age of sexual emotion, are not less interesting subjects of study. Thus, the characteristic traits of Marchesa Scremin, one of the secondary characters in "*Piccolo Mondo Moderno*," is pictured in a few vivid sentences which tell of maternal grief borne with Christian fortitude, and silently.

Dowager Maironi, in "*Piccolo Mondo Antico*," is a complete and unforgettable character. She symbolizes a fast-vanishing society, yet is she a living and throbbing personality. Her avarice and superstition, her obduracy, her stately manners, and the peculiar authority which she exerts over her entourage, give to her plump colorless face originality and power.

But there are other pictures, full-length portraits, which better illustrate Fogazzaro's feminine ideal.—Elena di San Giuliano, for instance, in "*Daniele Cortis*." Nothing can be more realistic than the preliminary analysis of this character. All the biological antecedents of her race, all the conditions and influences of her surroundings, are strongly, crudely presented. Her fatal abasement is a logical sequence. Her own mother's depravity, her slight education and neglected upbringing, culminating in marriage with an irreclaimable wretch; the levity of all her companions, save courageous though bigoted Uncle Lao, and their tacit approval of the fault which she has not committed, but which they imagine inevitable; even the outrage of her vile hus-

band's jealousy; everything urges her into sin. Yet she renounces the love that would mean an honored and easy life and joy unspeakable; with breaking heart she condemns her beloved Daniele to misery, and follows her husband into shameful exile.

Fogazzaro leaves this final step unexplained. Having sounded the abyss of scientific analysis and measured its limitations, for the ultimate result he provides only a metaphysical solution. At the time he wrote "*Daniele Cortis*," his own religious development would not have suggested a miraculous intervention of Divine Providence to account for this sudden resolution of a woman without religious instincts. Yet Fogazzaro is a Latin, living in a country where neither public sentiment nor private feelings as to the obligations of the marriage state would suffice to deter a woman of Elena's rank and education from following the impulses of her heart. In place of the restraining influence of public opinion in regard to the sanctity of marriage, or craven fear of breaking the Decalogue, he suggests that in every human soul there is an unerring guide to right action, a power strong enough to uplift the world.

Fogazzaro's selection of a feminine character to exemplify this moral struggle was a promising earnest, which has been realized in the character of Luisa Maironi, in the novel "*Piccolo Mondo Antico*," one of the most noble types of womanhood in Italian fiction. In order to elucidate the one decisive crisis in her life, with careful analysis Luisa is studied under every aspect of her development. Altruism, the key-note of her character, informs her every act and thought. Tender solicitude for her sickly mother, grateful appreciation of her uncle's protection, encouragement of her husband's plans, unwearied care for her child, everywhere and always she scatters the sun-bright light of her affection in active charity, kind words and unfailing good-humor. Her ideal is of justice, courage, endurance and human love. Her affection for Franco is strong and passionate, but it has none of that moral cowardice which bids the intellect and conscience surrender their right of control. The opposition between her ideas and those of her husband is always conscious; and when the struggle comes, when she has to choose between Franco's Christian submission to wrong and her own notion of right, she accepts the fatal estrangement rather than purchase her happiness by a renouncement of her ideal.

In the second part of the novel, Fogazzaro strained the evolution of his character so as to serve his purpose: his moral thesis required that Luisa be "converted" and that Franco's piety triumph. Accordingly, he presents grief, the maddening grief of a mother who, gazing on her only child's dead body, feels that she is in part responsible for this loss. Luisa's rebellious spirit at first is crushed, and then come conscientious misgivings; whilst Franco's pious soul finds consolation in thoughts of eternal happiness for his dead child, and something of joy in the feeling that his little one has been removed from the temptations of this wicked world. Luisa, in her despair, turns to the delusions of spiritism, but through her love for Franco she finally accepts his theory of Christian resignation and is comforted by the same Faith.

In his last novel, "*Il Santo*," Fogazzaro has adopted the sterner and more Catholic standpoint, and his Jeanne de Salle appears like an embodiment of Evil, tempting the "Saint" to the sin of love; but, when he wrote "*Piccolo Mondo Antico*," he had not yet decided for this interpretation of the great problem. His less prejudiced mind, in its eagerness for the complete truth, could still discern some of the complex changes of the human heart; he could see that, after the softening influence of grief, a woman's craving for pure tenderness and comfort must revive with tenfold power; he could also interpret in its double current of sensations and feelings the conjugal love and the blind maternal instinct that were stirring after a long period of depression in Luisa's heart and nerves; and above these elements of love, he knew that an infinite desire of making this bond everlasting, beyond the limits of time and space, must lead to a belief in the life after death and the promise of the joys of heaven. Luisa is not persuaded by argument, nor is she enslaved by an impetus of passion, but she is influenced by a blending of many diverse sentiments. Under the stress of threatening danger, the forebodings of an uncertain future and the necessity of immediate parting, her affection for her husband revives, and in the perfect communion of the two hearts all doubts are dispelled. The importance of the religious sentiment in the relations between man and woman, so conspicuous in many English and American novels, was almost a novelty in Italy, but Fogazzaro pursues it in his subsequent novels.

Elena di San Giuliano, Luisa Maironi and Jeanne de Salle are three important creations in Italian romance. They are impersonations of human tendencies, instinctive desire and every other natural craving which stands in opposition to the pietism and mystic religious exaltation of the three men whom they love, Daniele Cortis, Franco and Piero Maironi.

Despite certain juvenile experiments and the profession of realism contained in the introduction to "*Giovanni Episcopo*," few modern novel writers have borrowed less from direct observation than has D'Annunzio, yet in his novels are to be found some of the most characteristic representations of Italian woman. This apparent contradiction may be explained by the fact that, although D'Annunzio lacks the aptitude for patient observation, he is richly dowered with the poet's gift of assimilation, with the artistic sense that instinctively grasps the elements of beauty and synthesizes them in an æsthetic composition. His right to the epithet of "*immaginifero*" (producer of images) is enforced by the finish of his feminine figures, while his shallow psychology is evinced in his attempted analysis of their feelings.

There is no humanity, no life, in these characters; the clumsiness of their reconstruction dulls the sense of disgust which some of their acts inspire. Thus, Giuliana Hermil, not merely consenting to the death of her new-born babe, but praying for success for the murderous enterprise; thus, Ippolita, in "*The Triumph of Death*," always obeying her lowest instincts. "*The Virgins of the Hills*," because they never assume to be anything but allegorical symbols, exemplify the author's power for thus creating figures of unparalleled beauty devoid of any psychic life, merely swayed in their actions, or moulded in their appearance, by the reflections emanating from the mind of their lover; ever flitting and changing according to his flitting and changeful moods. Indeed, this essential trait is common to many of D'Annunzio's characters of women. They are phantoms created by the imagination of one man, embodiments of his desire, realizations of his æsthetic dream.

"*Piacere*," one of D'Annunzio's earliest works, wherein he has lavishly scattered the gifts of his poetic inspiration and the dross of his artistic sensualism, contains three very original feminine figures. Around this Child of Volupty these three shadows arise, projected by the fire of his perverted imagination. Maria Fleres,

the empress of his higher thoughts, the artist who stirs within him an almost chaste admiration, is the reflected image of all that is still unsullied in his soul. Elena Muti, the queen of voluptu, perverted in her refinement, mixing with her utmost depravity a worship for art, is the incarnation of his less avowable feelings. Francesca d'Ateleta is the dimly shadowed profile of his blurred reminiscences of social bonds, family ties and intellectual friendship.

These three personages move clumsily around the man they love, their feelings remain unexplained, their motives confused, and little sympathy is felt for their fate; yet every reader feels that they are stamped with a genuinely Italian physiognomy.

Maria Fleres, of stately beauty, wears her modern gown like the drapery of an antique statue. Her interpretation of music, both passionate and imaginative; her love, both chaste in its spirit and sensual in the deed; her religious scruples and her humbleness before her lover all fix her Italian figure and her Italian mind.

Elena Muti has inherited from the Borgias that perverted sensualism, that intellectual depravity, which blends the most refined æsthetics with the most cruel desires.

Francesca D'Ateleta, too, is eminently an Italian character, an impersonation of that subtle charm, that *gentilezza* which distinguishes the Italian *dama* from every other gentlewoman. She has little of the Frenchwoman's *esprit* and none of the Englishwoman's *hauteur*. Her attitude and her intonations are less studied, her manners more stately, her smile warmer, her glance more direct; she ignores shyness and scorns etiquette, but has an instinctive abhorrence for vulgarity. It has taken centuries of Petrarchism and Arcadia, of courtly life and seclusion from vulgar contact, of communion with masterpieces of art, to produce this type of *Signora*, and that peculiar character of *gentilezza*, which may be termed a politeness that is sincere, an art that has become nature. It is an untranslatable word, because it answers to a conception of social intercourse without exact equivalent in other countries.

But another woman in D'Annunzio's novels claims, with better right, to synthesize the Italian woman, because, beside all these characters of external beauty, she also possesses—that which the others lacked—a living and throbbing soul, and because this soul is Italian. Foscarina, of "*Il Fuoco*," the grand tragedienne, is,

like all those things of beauty which have been much incensed and much admired, peculiarly attractive in the hour of her decline. It is as if the beauty of the poetry she has interpreted, the flame of the amours she has inspired, the perfume of the incense she has received, still clung to her, adding to her power of seduction. She shares with the golden sunset on the *laguna*, with the autumnal glory of fiery leafage, and the crumbling magnificence of her Venice, the evanescent charm of that which is doomed to disappear. This charm, made of exquisite sensations and spiritualized impressions, has been rendered by D'Annunzio with his usual power of expression, and also with a sincerity that is novel. Foscarina is not merely beautiful, and she does not merely appeal to the senses of her lover. She stirs within him deeper feelings, and in her turn she is actuated by higher motives. The dazzling picture of beauty, the delightful symphony of harmonious language, is not the final aim of the book, but only the background to a story of passion, of love and sacrifice. Foscarina, for love, will renounce her lover, and part from him almost without hope of future meeting. And this devotion, this tragic crisis, shows how essentially Italian she is: Italian in the stately pose which no emotions can ruffle, Italian in her unconscious preoccupation with beauty, Italian in her forgetfulness of reality, in the triumph of love over the long-enslaved flesh.

After the barren attempts of realism and the clumsy studies of pure psychology, this poetical reconstruction of the feminine type indicates a new manner of interpretation. Neither cold observation nor scientific analysis has produced any satisfactory literary representation of the Italian Woman. Has not the time come for trying a new method? The preliminary studies have indicated some of the elements of reality. It now remains for some comprehending spirit to seize them and idealize them in a poetic reconstruction. If this shall happen, it will have been once more the poet's glory to show the way and indicate the method. Others will follow, and, considering the activity of modern Italian novelists, will perchance promptly achieve that only picture which is yet wanting in the gallery of Italian fiction: the true portrait of the Italian Woman.

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